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PRESERVING THE PAST: RENOVATION OF HISTORIC CAS VENERANDA BUILDING TO RESTORE AND PRESERVE ITS FORMER MAGNIFICENCE

📅 **March 13, 2024**(<https://arubapapers.com/2024/03/13/>)

One of Aruba's most iconic structures, Cas Veneranda, is set to undergo a significant restoration as part of broader efforts to rejuvenate Oranjestad.

Upon completion, the Department of Economic Affairs will relocate to the building. Additionally, there will be space for lease for a restaurant, as well as areas for meetings and conferences. The relocation of government departments to downtown Oranjestad is part of a strategy to attract more visitors during office hours, thereby benefiting businesses in the neighborhood.

Cas Veneranda will not only provide new office space but will also be equipped with solar panels to reduce monthly electricity costs, efficient air conditioning, and insulation — all essential elements for transforming the building into a more sustainable and environmentally friendly structure.

On Tuesday, March 12th, the Monument Foundation of Aruba (SMFA), in the presence of the Minister of Economic Affairs, Communication, and Sustainable Development, Geoffrey Wever, and the Minister of Finance and Culture, Xiomara Maduro, along with project partners and other guests, officially launched the restoration project of Cas Veneranda.



Last year, the SMFA announced that they had reached an agreement to purchase the building from the heirs of Federico Maximiliaan (Machi) and Maria Veneranda Arends. The official transfer of Cas Veneranda took place in the presence of a notary, Mr. Michelle Gomes, from Notary Office Mr. M.J.G. Tromp, with representatives of the Arends family. The symbolic key to Cas Veneranda was handed over to the president of the SMFA, Rousanne de Weever.

Additionally, the mortgage agreement was signed with the Aruba General Pension Fund Foundation (APFA), which will co-finance the project along with the National Restoration Fund of the Netherlands (NRF) and the Ministry of Economic Affairs, Communication, and Sustainable Development.

One of the significant conditions for obtaining financing from the NRF and for the SMFA to purchase a building is that it must have monumental value and be protected. In the case of Cas Veneranda, a request for protection was submitted to the Monument Bureau. Once the restoration project is completed and the protection process is finalized, a seal of protection will be placed on the facade, indicating that it is a protected monument.

Another important condition for the Monument Foundation to start a new project to acquire and restore a monument is to have a lease agreement that ensures the SMFA can cover the project's expenses and the building's maintenance. Once completed, Cas Veneranda will have two tenants responsible for bringing new life to the building. DEACI (Department of Economic Affairs, Commerce, and Industry) will be the main tenant. The SMFA is in negotiations with one of the two tenants for the hospitality sector, which will be announced soon. The building will feature two distinct functions, ensuring that the entire community can visit and appreciate this beautiful monument with its unique architecture.

In September, the SMFA presented the construction team responsible for the project, consisting of Orlando Hoevertsz Archidesign as the architect, Hecom, Dynaf, Smart Systems, and Protec bou, under the guidance of our project leader, Daphne Every. The team has been working on the research and design phase of the restoration.

A demolition event was recently held, where several companies participated in the initial phase, which involves demolition works. Based on price, plans, and expertise, the project was awarded to the company General Property. Non-original parts of the building will be removed to facilitate historical research, and a section of the building's rainwater tank with high humidity will be opened to allow fresh air to enter.

Minister of Economic Affairs, Communication, and Sustainable Development, Geoffrey Wever, along with Minister of Finance and Culture, Xiomara Maduro, and DEACI director, Maria Dijkhof Pita, officially launched the restoration project by commencing the demolition.

In the coming days, the contractor will continue with the works, expected to last approximately three months. Following this phase, another tender will be issued to select the company for the restoration works to bring the building back to its former glory. The SMFA hopes that by the end of 2025, Aruba will have another fully restored monument for future generations to enjoy.

Cas Veneranda, the impressive building on Wilhelminastraat, was constructed in 1936 by Federico Maximiliaan (Machi) Arends, who served as the Spanish consul. The renowned architect, Dada Picus, traveled to Cartagena, Colombia, for inspiration from a building that Machi's wife, Maria Veneranda, admired, returning to Aruba to construct the building now known as Cas Veneranda. It was one of the largest houses in Aruba at the time of its construction.

In addition to being a residence, it also housed a flower shop, an ice cream parlor, and the Spanish consulate. In the seventies, the building was converted into Papiamento Restaurant. After the restaurant closed, it served various other functions, such as a nightclub, before falling into disuse. A major fire in 2014 destroyed a large part of the interior, leading to the building's closure for safety reasons, awaiting full restoration.



The Monument Foundation of Aruba has been in existence since 1996 and is a non-governmental organization responsible for acquiring, restoring, leasing, and maintaining monuments in Aruba. In addition to this, it also emphasizes education and awareness about the importance of our monuments as part of our cultural heritage. Cas Veneranda becomes the 17th monument owned by the Monument Foundation of Aruba.

For more information and to follow the project closely, visit: www.monumentenfondsaruba.com IG: @monumentsfundaruba fb: Stichting Monumentenfondsaruba



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